

Do You Have Prince Albert in a Can?

A chronology of pocket tobacco tins

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Prince Albert Tobacco

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company first began producing Prince Albert in 1907, patenting their process on July 30th. Their product was first distributed in small cloth bags until 1909 when it was placed into a tin. The product was extremely successful, becoming the most popular smoked tobacco in the 1930s. In the 1950s with the emergence of pre-rolled cigarettes, Prince Albert fell in popularity along with other loose tobaccos. In 1987, the company was sold to John Middleton Company, which still produces a couple of Prince Albert products.

Note: When the Prince Albert brand was sold to John Middleton Co., all files on advertisements and canning technologies were discarded², as a result, the majority of the information presented in this chronology was obtained through the examination of magazine advertisements dating from 1910-1966.

Points of Development

- 1907 First produced, sold in cloth bags
- 1909 First tin, labeled "Now King" (fig. 1)
- 1910 Now labeled "Crimp Cut", after the death of King Edward VII, known as Prince Albert before his crowning in 1902. Reynolds begins manufacturing their tins⁶
- 1913 Lid is now shallower (fig. 2 and 3)
- 1930 1" tax stamps with Series labels, beginning with Series 100⁴
- 1938 Notched lid introduced. (fig. 4) Hinge type changes from a 5-part hinge to 3-part hinge (fig.5).
- 1943-45 Cardboard packing used during WWII
- 1942/1945 Funeral Edition with a black lid. ⁴ (fig. 6)
- 1948 New Humidor top, lid is no longer notched (fig. 7). First appearance of "Prince Albert" embossed on bottom of tin.
- 1950 Molded ridge with notched line, labeled "to open, push up" (fig. 8)
- 1955 Series tax stamps discontinued, ending with Series 125⁵
- 1955-59 Series 125 ¾" tax stamps used⁵
- 1960 Opening instructions changed to "push up." Back stamp disappears, replaced by copy of the front image with "open other side," printed in a white block below the lid. Net weight 1 5/8 oz. embossed on the lid (fig 9).
- 1963 Zip code included in address, net weight is now on the bottom of the label (fig. 10)⁵
- ~1964 Possible switch from 1 5/8 oz labeling to 1 1/2 oz labeling (fig. 11)
- 1964-66 Old Timer Knife offer on tin (fig. 12)²
- 1975 UPC Code added to labels (fig. 13)⁵
- 1987 Prince Albert sold to John Middleton Co.²

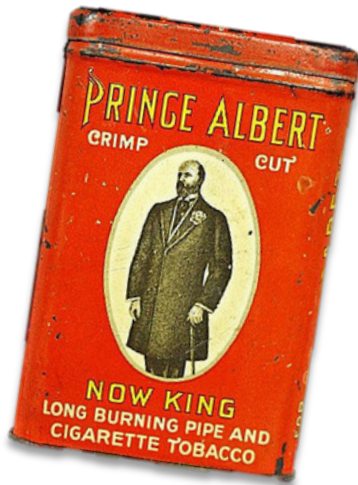


Figure 1⁴. 1909-1913 - This is the first edition of the Prince Albert pocket tobacco tin. Notice how it says “Now King” instead of “Crimp Cut.” This style was produced in 1909. Between 1910 and 1913, this same lid style was used, but “Crimp Cut” replaced “Now King” in 1910.

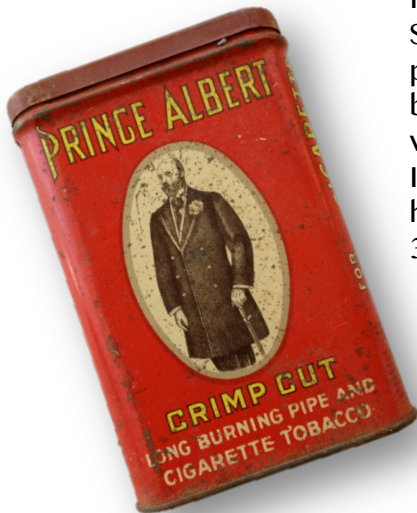


Figure 2³ (left). 1913-1938 - Second version of the Prince Albert pocket tin. This tin style was used between 1913 and 1938 before it was replaced the notched lid style. Its predecessors may not have had hinged lids, but as shown in Figure 3³ (right), these tins were hinged.

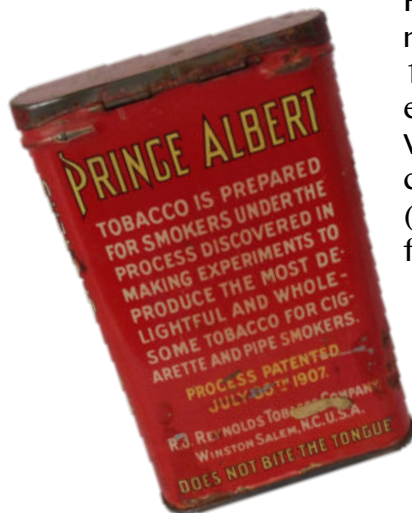
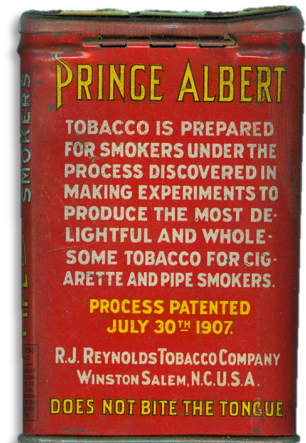


Figure 4³ (right). 1938-1948 - This notched lid tin was first introduced in 1938 and was produced until 1948 except for a three-year period during World War II (1943-1945) when cardboard tins were used. Figure 5¹ (left), hinge style also switches from a five-part hinge to a three-part hinge.





Figure 6¹. In 1942/45, a black painted notched lid was produced, it is referred to as the funeral edition, in honor of King Albert⁴.

Figure 7¹. 1948-1950 - In 1948, the new humidor top was introduced, designed to be airtight. Initially it was painted red, and embossed "Improved Top." In addition, "Prince Albert" is now embossed on the bottom of the tin.

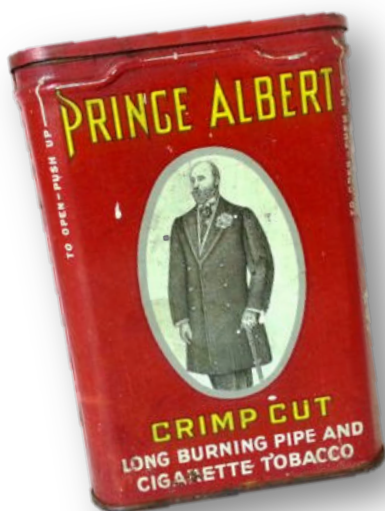


Figure 8³. 1950-1960 - In 1950, the molded ridge on the front of the tin became notched and opening instructions, "to open, push up," were added to either side.

Figure 9³. 1960-1963 - In 1960, the opening instructions were changed to "push up." Back stamp disappears, replaced by copy of the front image with "open other side," printed in a white block below the lid. The net weight (1 ⁵/₈ oz)

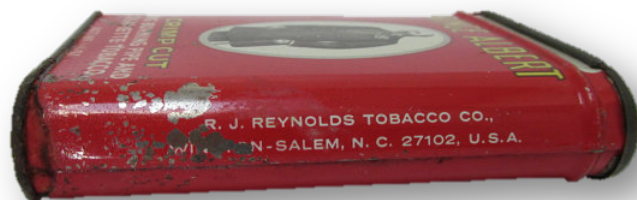


Figure 10³. 1963-1964 - In 1963, the company's zip code was added to the address listed on the left side of the tin.⁵ Net weight listed on the bottom of the label.

Figure 11³. **1964-1975** - Possibly around 1964, the labeled net weight changed from 1 ⁵/₈ oz to 1 ½ oz.



Figure 12¹. **1964-1966** - Between 1964 and 1966, a promotional tin was produced advertising an exclusive “Old Timer Knife” offer.²

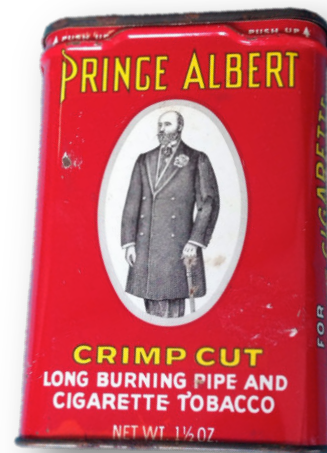
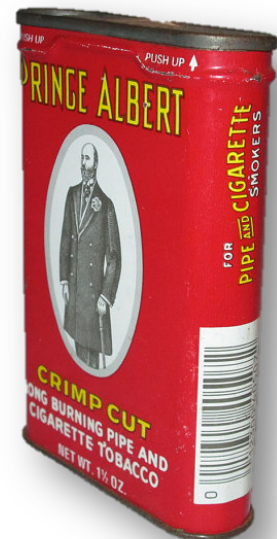


Figure 13¹. In approximately 1975, Universal Product Codes (UPCs) were added to the right side of tins.⁵



Missing Information

The disadvantage of compiling a chronology from magazine ads, is that only one side of the tin is displayed in these ads and that not all features are depicted. During the notched lid version of the tin there were two different three-part hinge styles, one smaller than the other, but I was unable to determine when these changes occurred. I also could not find out how long “Improved Top” was imprinted on the new humidor tops or when the lids stopped being painted.

Tax Stamp Chronology⁵

“Series of” tax stamps

Series of 1879: Appeared on tax stamps from 1879 through 1882.

Series of 1883: Appeared on tax stamps from 1883 through 1886.

Series of 1887: Appeared on tax stamps from 1887 through 1897.

Series of 1898: Appeared on tax stamps from 1898 through 1900.

Series of 1901: Appeared on tax stamps from 1901 through 1908.

Series of 1909: Appeared on tax stamps in 1909 only.

Series of 1910: Appeared on tax stamps from 1910 through 1916.

Series of 1917: Appeared on tax stamps from 1917 through 1920

1921-1929: No series date, date may be overprinted

1" Wide "Series" Stamps

Series 100	1930	Series 114	1944
Series 101	1931	Series 115	1945
Series 102	1932	Series 116	1946
Series 103	1933	Series 117	1947
Series 104	1934	Series 118	1948
Series 105	1935	Series 119	1949
Series 106	1936	Series 120	1950
Series 107	1937	Series 121	1951
Series 108	1938	Series 122	1952
Series 109	1939	Series 123	1953
Series 110	1940	Series 124	1954
Series 111	1941	Series 125	1955
Series 112	1942		
Series 113	1943		

¾" Wide "Series" Stamps

Series 125 1956-1959

References

¹Ebay, Inc.

<http://www.ebay.com>, accessed November 19, 2014.

²Ellingsen, Dennis.

2002 Prince Albert in a Can. *Oregon Knife Collectors*. Electronic document, [http://oregonknifeclub.com/Newsletter 0203.pdf](http://oregonknifeclub.com/Newsletter%200203.pdf), accessed November 19, 2014.

³Etsy, Inc.

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⁴Di Leone, Gerardo

Personal communication, November 13, 2014, February 1, 2015.

⁵McDonald, Michael.

How to Date a Cigarette Pack. *Pack's Secrets*. Electronic document, <http://www.cycleback.com/packdate.html>, accessed November 19, 2014.

⁶Rock, James T.

Jim Rock Historic Can Collection. *Hannon Library Digital Collections*. Southern Oregon State University.

<http://cdm16085.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16085coll5/id/424/rec/32>, accessed January 26, 2015.